Evolving the application
to expand transfer student access & equity

Batanya Gipson
Program Director,
Transfer & Community College

Meredith Lombardi
Associate Director,
Outreach & Education

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Who do we have in the audience?

Agenda

- Common App community
- Removing application barriers
- Advising tools
- Looking ahead
- Your questions

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Common App community

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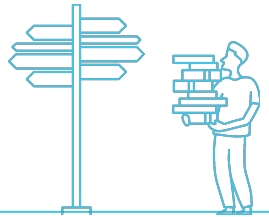
Who we are

Mission

Common App is a nonprofit membership organization committed to the pursuit of access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process.



Vision

Forging a direct, unambiguous path to a viable future for all students.

Strategy

Expanding the variety of students and institutions we serve.

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Organizational evolution

Pre-2014

Non-profit membership association

“We serve students, member institutions, and secondary schools.”

2014–2019

Non-profit technology company

“Helping students by helping members.”

2019 onward

Mission-driven non-profit membership association enabled by technology

“Serving students serves our members.”

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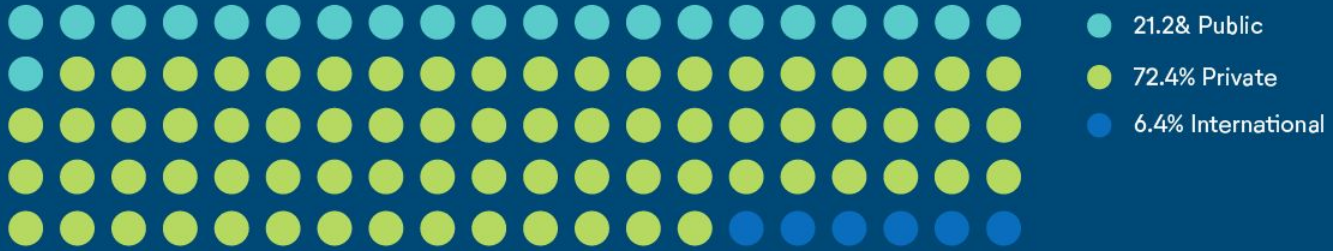
Member colleges

900+

Member colleges

Public vs. private status



61

International colleges

83

Minority serving institutions

68.5% of member colleges accept Common App for transfer

Common App in New York

98 Member institutions

25 Public

83 Accept transfer app

73 Private

commonapp.org/explore

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2021-2022 new members

35 New members and counting

18 US states

Common App's newest members include all of the public universities in Illinois

Public institutions

- Austin Peay State University (TN)
- Colorado Mesa University (CO)
- Colorado School of Mines (CO)
- Fort Lewis College (CO)
- James Madison University (VA)
- Oregon Tech (OR)
- Portland State University (OR)
- The University of Alabama (AL)
- University of North Georgia (GA)
- Westfield State University (MA)
- Eastern Illinois University (IL)
- Governors State University (IL)
- Illinois State University (IL)
- Northeastern Illinois University (IL)
- Southern Illinois University Carbondale (IL)
- Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (IL)
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IL)
- University of Illinois Springfield (IL)
- Western Illinois University (IL)

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Student trends

5.6M

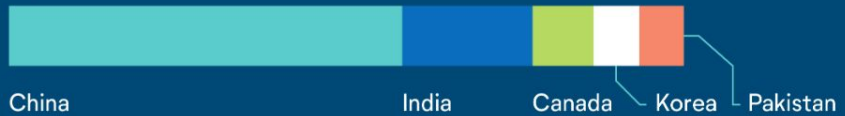
Applications submitted

1.1M

Unique applicants

Top 5 student home states

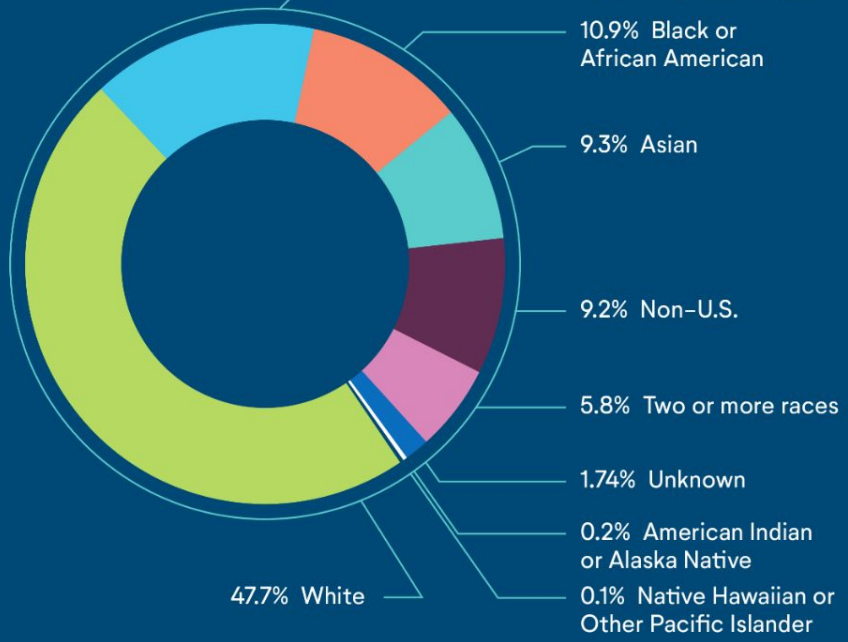
Top 5 international student home countries



First-year vs. transfer

91.4% First-year

8.6% Transfer



Grants and funding

We are managing $6M in multi-year grants from 9 major foundations

These grants are helping us advance our access agenda, covering:

- student and family engagement
- college coaching
- evidence-based interventions
- scholarship solutions
- community college pathways
- data and research

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Removing application barriers

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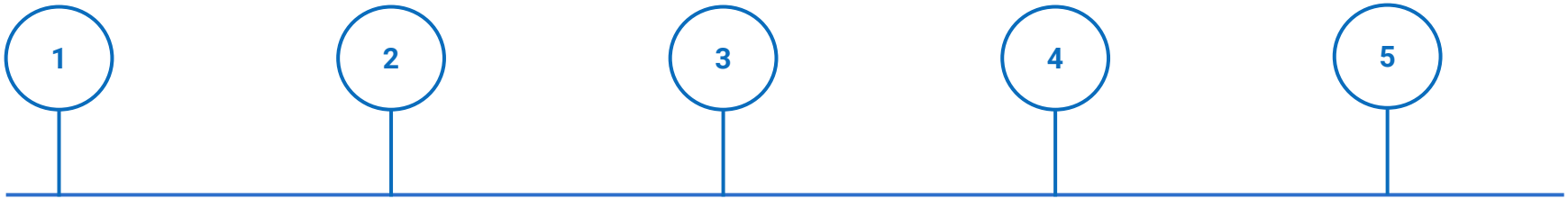
Opportunity for the application to reflect the diversity of its students and members

What is Evolving the App?

Evolving the App is an initiative that examines categories within the common portion of the application, as part of Common App's ongoing effort to create an inclusive application for all students.

The inaugural project ran from March 2020 – February 2021. We will repeat this process on an annual basis.



March–June

Identified sections to examine

July–August

Conducted exploration and analyzed data

September–October

Compiled findings and analysis

November–December

Convened experts, gathered additional feedback, and finalized revisions

January–February

Delivered final revisions to Common App technology team and members

commonapp.org/evolvingtheapp

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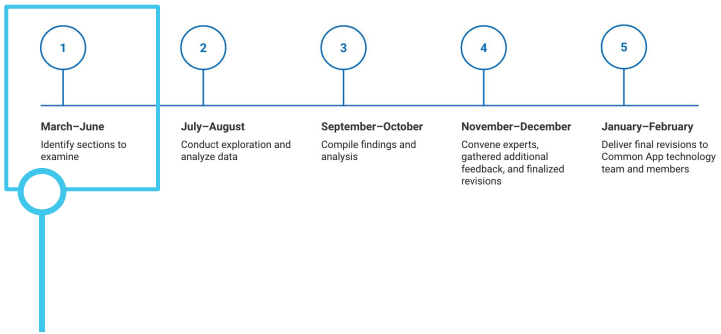
2020 Evolving the App sections



During the first phase of Evolving the App, we identified **six high-priority categories** within the common portion of the application.

Sex and gender

Religious affiliation *(*FY only)*

Citizenship

Military discharge

Family *(*FY only)*

School discipline

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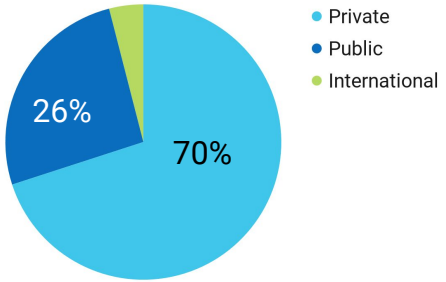
Fall 2020 member survey

Objectives

- Provide a baseline understanding of which data within 6 high priority clusters is most necessary for admissions and enrollment.
- Inform communication and appropriate change management for “Evolving the application.”

Responses

- 262 individual responses
- 208 members



Questions

For each item in the 6 high priority clusters:

- Is this information necessary for an admission decision?
- Is this information necessary for enrollment?
- Would you add this question to your member screen if not in the common questions?
- Do you have another way (outside Common App) to obtain this information?

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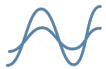
Key takeaways

For **Religion** and **Military Discharge**, scores indicate that **these sections can be revised or removed** to be more inclusive **with minimal impact on admissions.**

Responses indicate that **neither Sex nor Gender is necessary for admissions**, but that many members need information re: Sex for enrollment.

Scores for **Family** indicate that **no individual item is needed for admissions,*** but multiple items related to parent information are needed for enrollment. Sibling information reflected low necessity across all items.

School Discipline scores indicate that members **depend less on Disciplinary History from Counselor** than Disciplinary History from Student.



Citizenship scores showed variance among individual items in the category, with **most items being necessary only for enrollment.**

**Item refers to an individual question (i.e. Parent Email) within a category (i.e. Family)*

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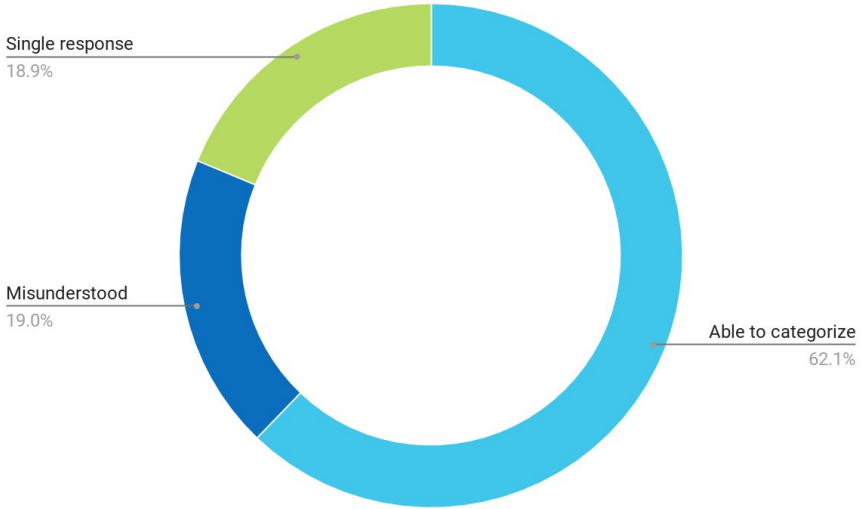
Sex and gender: data

If you would like the opportunity, we invite you to share more about your gender identity below

19% of students misunderstood the gender question



"I identify as transgender. (Ftm) but, for personal reasons **will not be sharing that with my family.**"

"I am a transgender woman. **My family does not know about this, please do not share it.**"

"I recently identified myself as a lesbian, however **I keep that a secret from my family.**"

"I am questioning my gender identity. **My family can't know**, but I lean towards the male spectrum."

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Sex and gender: revisions

Using Common App data and external research, we identified the following revisions:

Sex

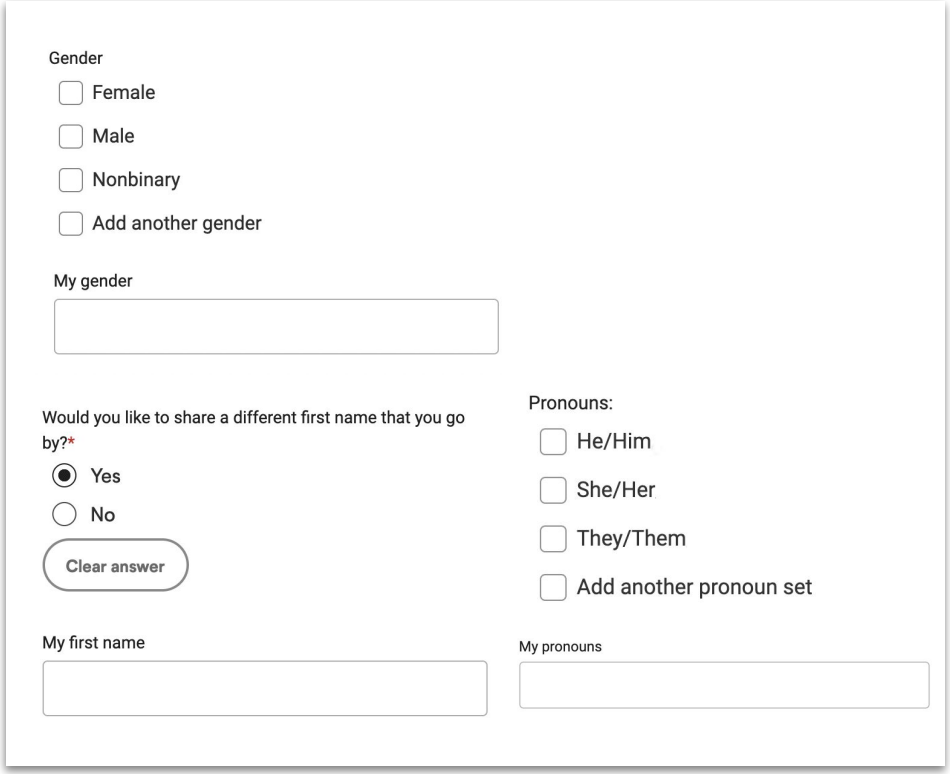
- Change label to “Legal sex”
- Move to Demographic section
- Switch order of Male/Female responses to appear in alphabetical order

Gender

- Change label to “Gender”
- Replace open text field with set choice values, one of which is an open text box

Additional changes

- Add optional “Pronouns” question
- Revise label and add clarifying question for “Preferred name”



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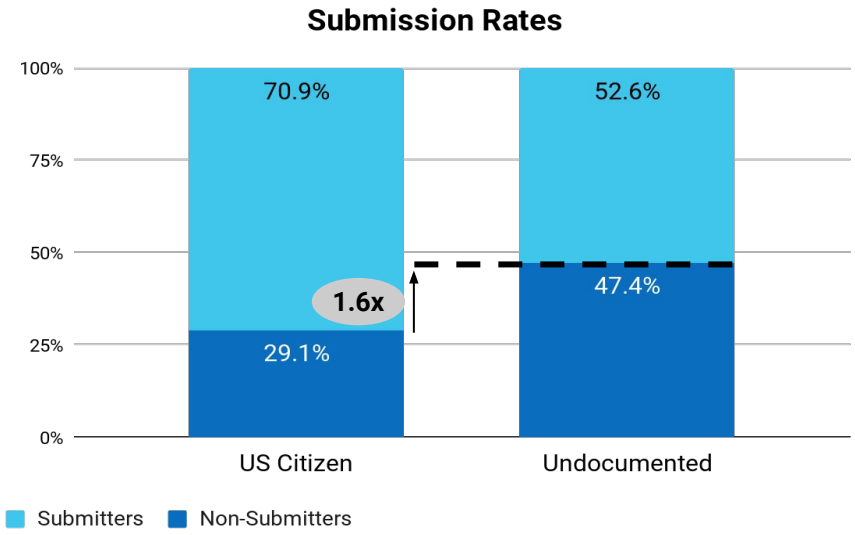
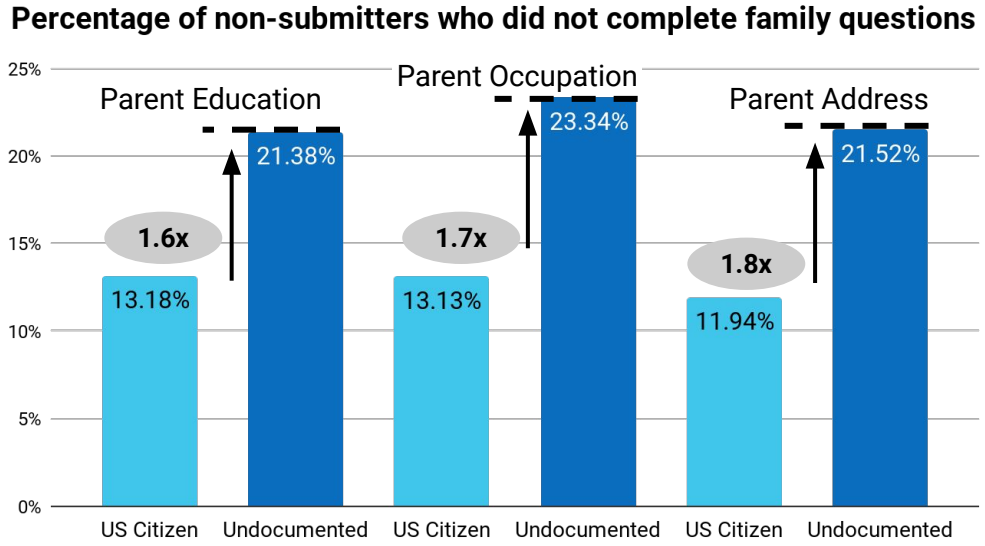
Citizenship and Family: data

We examined Common App's Citizenship, Geography, and Family sections with a focus on barriers for undocumented/DACA students.





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Citizenship and Family: process and revisions

Using Common App data and a process to solicit input and feedback from multiple stakeholders, we identified the following revisions:

Citizenship

- Consolidate with Geography and re-title, “Geography and Nationality”
- Add a citizenship choice value for “DACA, undocumented, Deferred Enforced Departure, and Temporary Protected Status”
- Remove Alien Registration Number questions
- Add a clarifying question for international students seeking a new visa

Geography

- Remove Years Lived Outside the U.S. question
- Make remaining questions optional
- Add an “Unknown” choice value for Birth Country

Family

Parent

- Remove Parent Birth Country, Parent Mailing Address, and Parent Position/Title
- Make Parent Occupation and Parent Employment Status optional
- Change Parent Occupation from single-select to multi-select

Sibling

- Remove Sibling Middle Initial, Relationship, and Education questions

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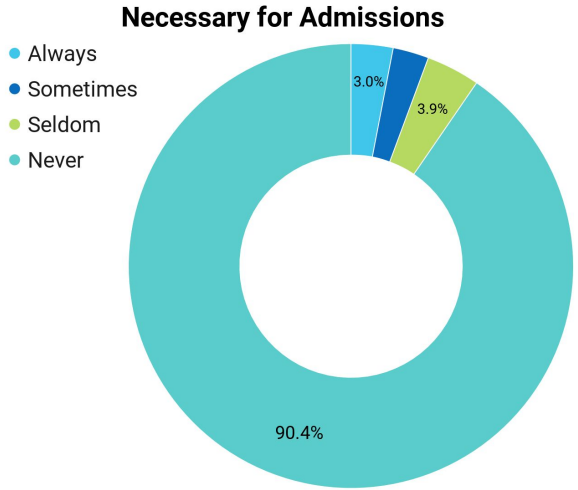
Religious preference

Over 36% of Common App members suppress the religious preference question in their data.



Using Common App data and member feedback, we identified the following revisions:

- Remove the religious preference question

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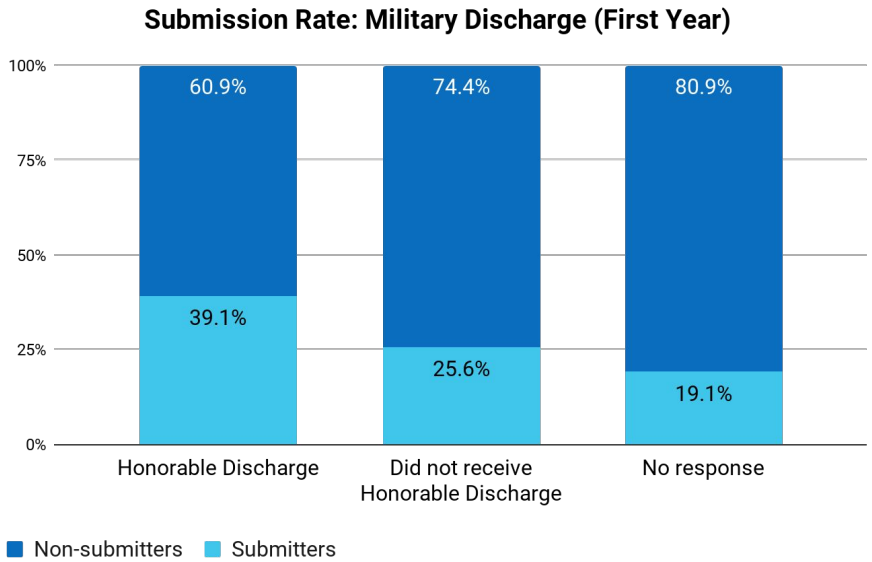
Military discharge

Over 58% of Common App member survey respondents said they never use the nature of military discharge in admissions.



Using Common App data, we identified the following revisions:

- Remove the military discharge question
- Improved workflow
- Connecting students to resources
- Adding a military status question in the Extended Profile with ability to show/hide military questions and documents in application based on response

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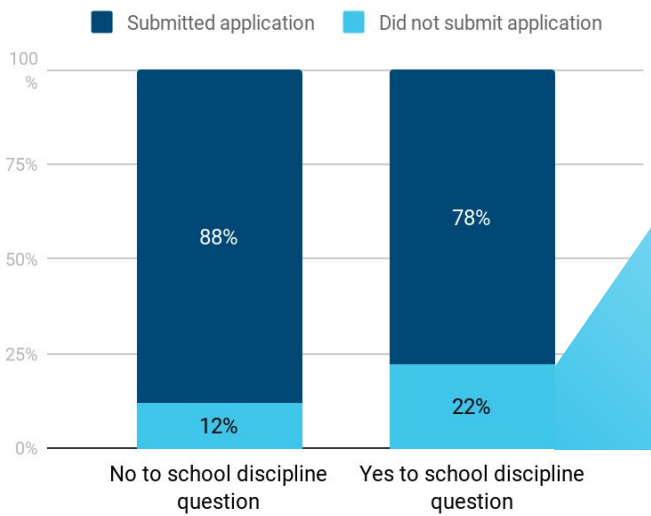
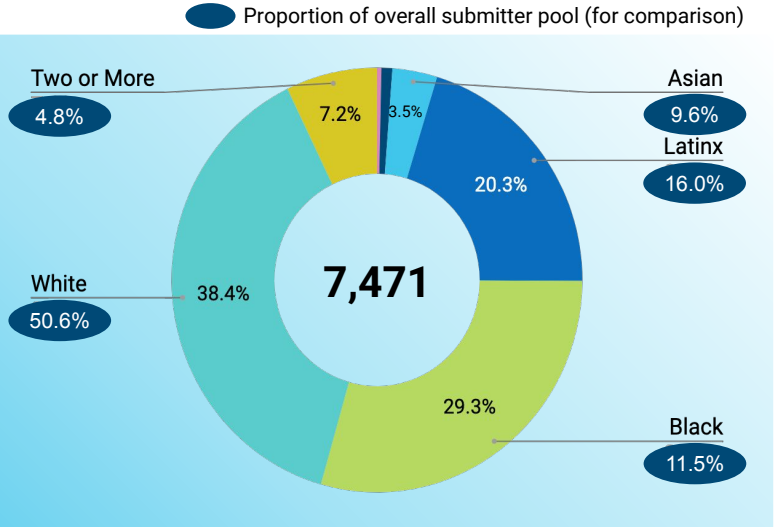
School discipline: data

Likelihood of submitting application based on answer to school discipline question





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School discipline: data and revisions

Common App data show that **applicants of color are less likely to submit** their applications than their white counterparts.

Students who **disclose school discipline** are **less likely to submit** an application.

Black and LatinX students are overrepresented in the pool of students who disclose school discipline and do not submit.

The racial **discipline gap is even larger** for Black, Native, and LatinX **female applicants.**

42% of counselor responses do not provide a 'yes' or 'no' answer to school discipline. **White and Asian students** are **least likely** to have a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Students of color are **less likely to attend a school that prevents disclosure of** school discipline.

Using Common App data, we identified the following revisions:

Application

- Remove the school discipline question

School report/ college report

- Remove the school discipline question

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Summary of changes

Sex and gender

- Revise questions that deal with gender identity
- Change the “Sex” question to “Legal sex” and move it to the demographics section

Citizenship

- Combine the Geography and Citizenship sections
- Revise, make options, or remove questions that may create barriers for undocumented/ DACA students

Family *(*FY only)*

- Revise, make optional, or remove questions that may create barriers for undocumented/ DACA students

Religious affiliation *(*FY only)*

- Remove the question on religious preference

Military discharge

- Remove the question on military discharge

School discipline

- Remove the school discipline question from the application and from the school report/ college report

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Advising tools

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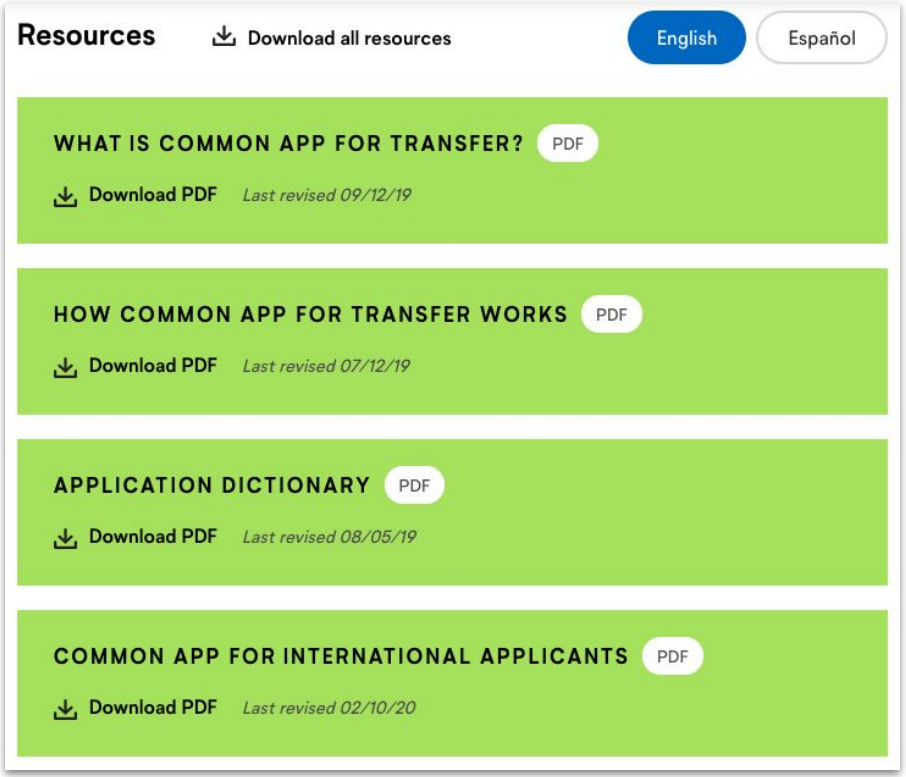
Common App Ready

A toolkit of tips and best practices to help students with each step of the application process

- Getting started
- Preparing your application
- Telling your story
- Working with recommenders and advisors
- Paying for college

commonapp.org/ready



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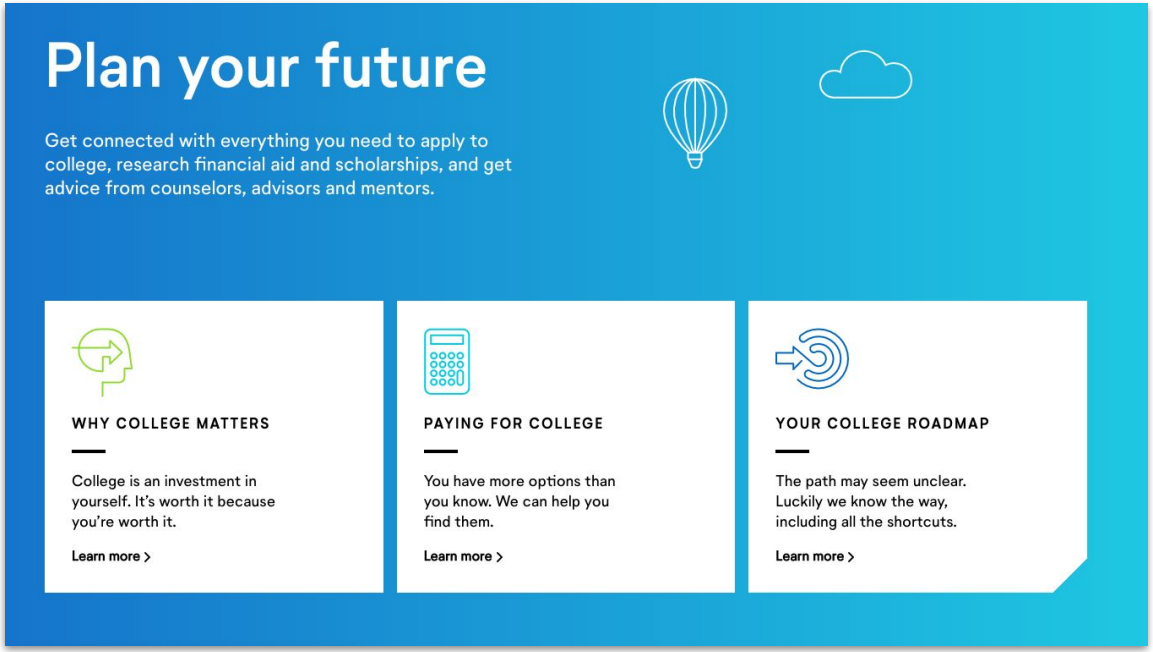
Plan for college

- College roadmaps for middle school, high school, community college, and military students
- Application and Recommender Guides
- Learn about paying for college
- Parent resources

commonapp.org/plan



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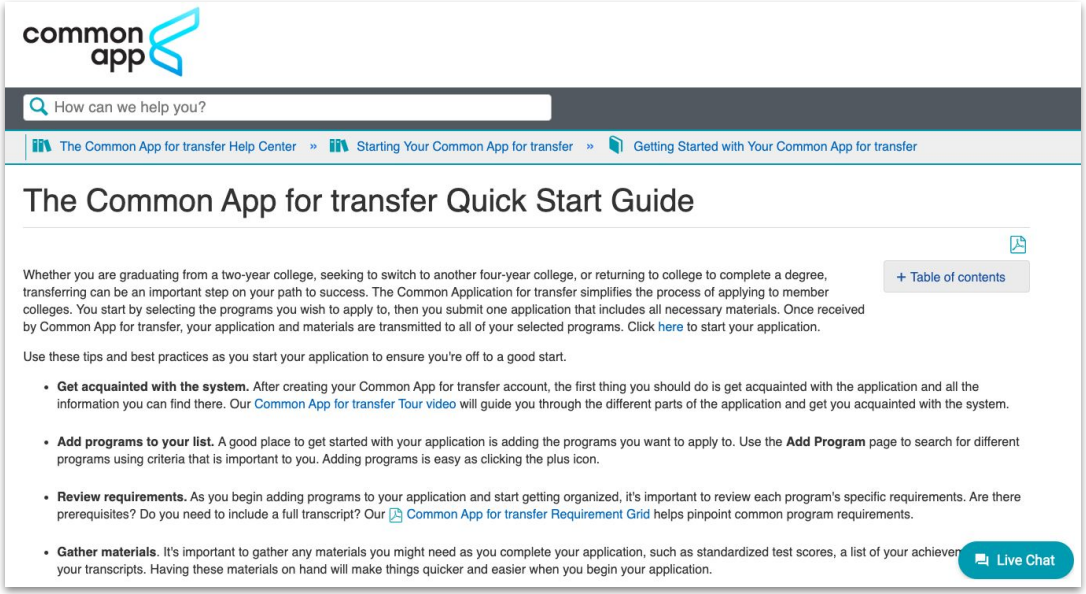
24/7 support

Help when you need it!

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Video tutorials
- Contact support

help.liaisonedu.com/The_Common_App_Help_Center



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Transfer requirements grid

common app

2020-21
Transfer Deadlines, Fees, and Requirements

Updated 9/30/20
* See bottom of document for notes

							Academic History		Documents			Recommendations *				
Common App Member	Program [1]	Start Term	Start Year	Deadline	Admission Plan	App Fee ($USD)	Coursework Entry [2]	College Transcripts [3]	Personal Statement [4]	College Report [5]	Mid-Term Report [6]	Academic	Personal	Professional	HS Official [7]	Learn More [8]
Emory & Henry College	Transfer Spring Admission	Spring	2021	12/1/20	Regular	0	None	Official	Required	Yes	Yes	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Emory & Henry College	Transfer Fall Admission	Fall	2021	7/15/21	Regular	0	None	Official	Required	Yes	Yes	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Emory University	Fall Transfer	Fall	2021	3/15/21	Regular	75	None	None	Optional	No, not used	No, not used	1 Required 4 Allowed	0 Required 4 Allowed	0 Required 4 Allowed	0 Required 4 Allowed	See website
Fairfield University	Spring 2021	Spring	2021	11/15/20	Regular	60	None	Official	None	Yes	Yes	0 Required 10 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Fairfield University	Fall 2021	Fall	2021	4/1/21	Regular	60	None	Official	None	Yes	Yes	0 Required 10 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Felician University	Undergraduate Transfer Spring 2021	Spring	2021	12/15/20	Rolling	30	Prerequisites	Official	Optional	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 3 Allowed	0 Required 3 Allowed	0 Required 3 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Felician University	Undergraduate Transfer Fall 2021	Fall	2021	7/26/21	Rolling	30	Prerequisites	Official	Optional	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 3 Allowed	0 Required 3 Allowed	0 Required 3 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	See website
Fisher College	Spring 2021	Spring	2021	1/20/21	Rolling	0	None	Official	None	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	See website
Fisher College	Fall 2021	Fall	2021	7/27/21	Rolling	0	None	Official	None	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	0 Required 1 Allowed	See website
Fisk University	Spring 2021	Spring	2021	10/1/20	Regular	0	All Coursework	Official	None	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Fisk University	Early Action 1	Fall	2021	11/1/20	Early Actior	0	All Coursework	Official	None	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Fisk University	Early Action 2	Fall	2021	2/1/21	Early Actior	0	All Coursework	Official	None	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website
Fisk University	Fall	Fall	2021	7/1/21	Regular	0	All Coursework	Official	None	No, not used	No, not used	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	0 Required 0 Allowed	See website

Available in the Quick Start Guide: **help.liaisonedu.com/The_Common_App_Help_Center**

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Learn more

- Create a practice student account
- Watch video tutorials
- Explore the Common App website
- Check out the blog for updates
- Sign up for the monthly newsletter
- Download Common App Ready resources
- Connect with us on social media
  #commonapp, #reachhigher, and #bettermakeroom
- Contact 24/7/365 support
  thecommonapplication@liaisoncas.com or commonapp.org/help

commonapp.org/transfer-counselors-and-advisors

Looking ahead

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Transfer student landscape

Current undergraduates

26% Traditional students

74% Remaining applicants, including military veterans and adult learners

Student mobility

37% College students who transfer at least once

45% College students who transfer more than once

Transfer students are more likely to…

- Work full time
- Have dependents other than a spouse
- Be a single parent
- Have no high school diploma
- Have taken more than a gap year
- Attend part time
- Be financially independent from parents

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2011–12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study

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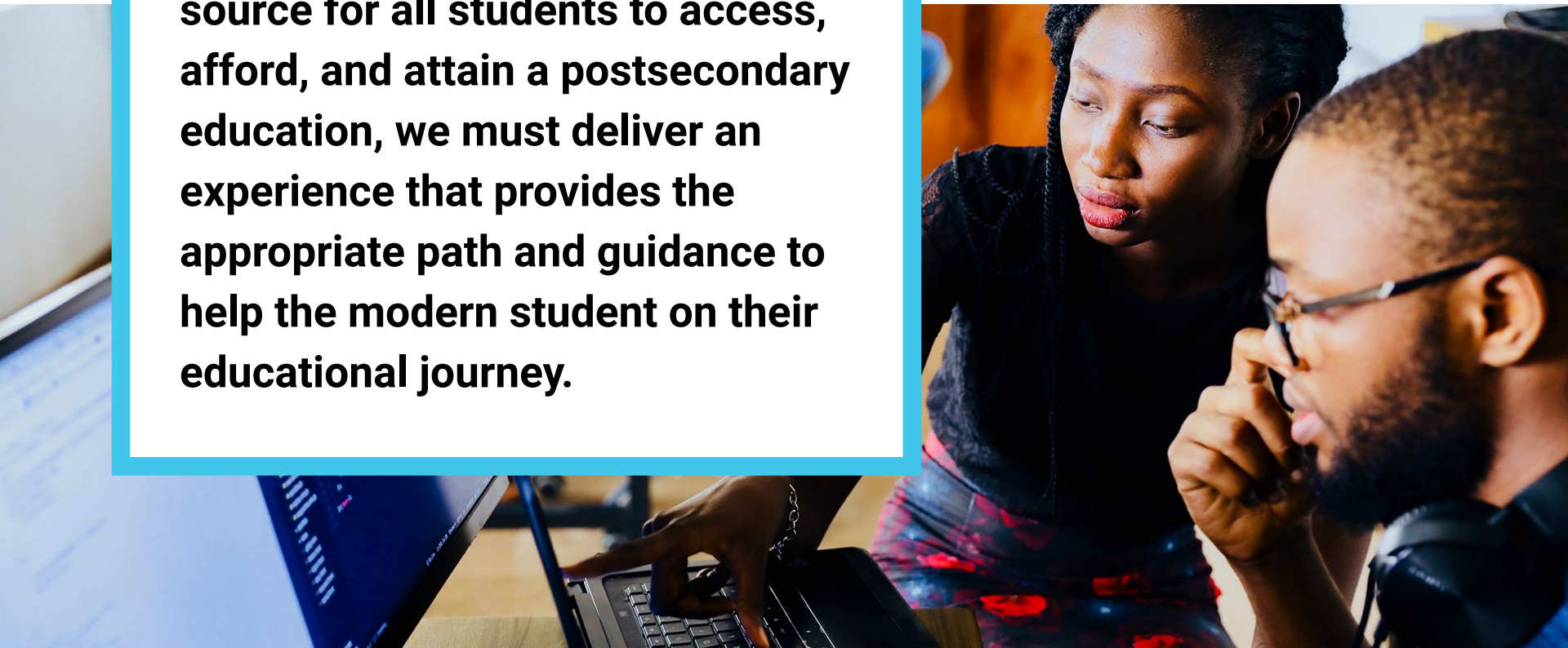
As we strive to become the trusted source for all students to access, afford, and attain a postsecondary education, we must deliver an experience that provides the appropriate path and guidance to help the modern student on their educational journey.



If we care about access and equity, we need to focus on pathways from institutions

2.4x

Low-income students are 2.4x more likely to start at a community college compared to students from the highest income

1.6x

Hispanic students are 1.6x more likely and Black students are 1.3x more likely to start at a community college compared to white students

2x

Applicants using our transfer application are 2x more likely to be **first-generation** compared to first-year applicants

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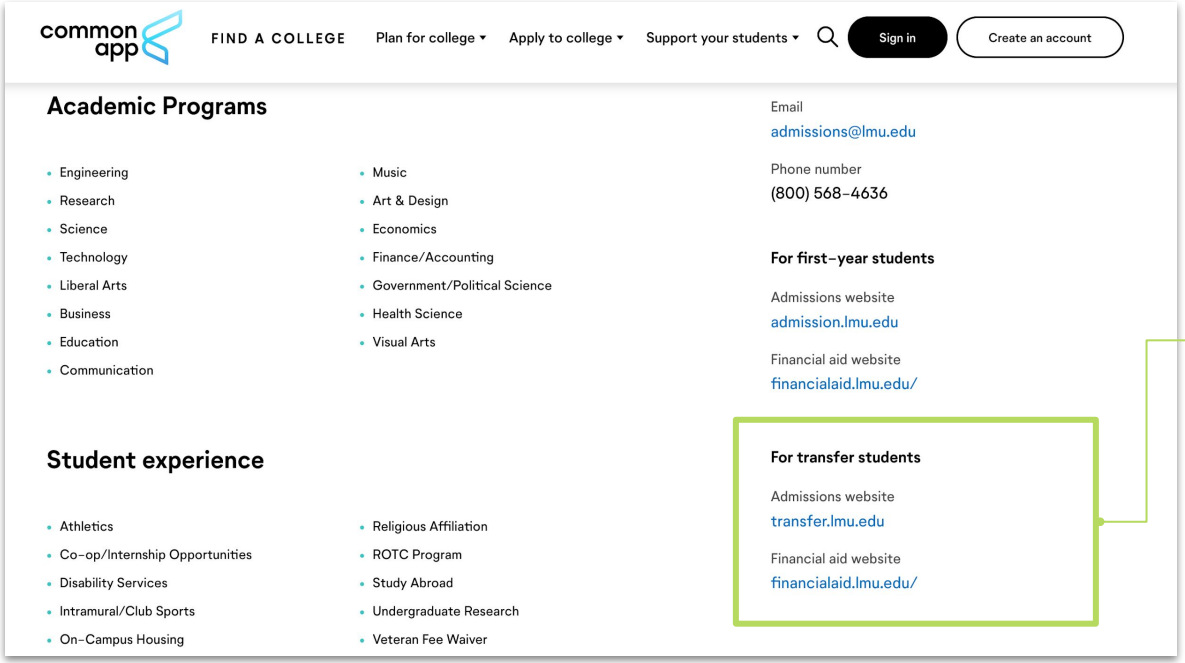
On our website, we will be adding guaranteed admission policies



Guaranteed admission website
transfer.lmu.edu/howtotransfer/prepare/specialprograms/transferguarantee/

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There is more we can do to support community colleges. We are dedicated to making this happen!

Community College Work Group

Meeting 1 - March 23, 2021

Presentation: Introduction to Common App and membership structure

Discussion question(s): Is there a benefit to community college membership? How can Common App be more inclusive of community colleges? What information is essential for a community college application?

Meeting 2 - April 20, 2021

Presentation: Transfer and articulation pathways

Discussion question: How can Common App help strengthen the pathway from community college to 4-year institutions.

Meeting 3 - May 18, 2021

Presentation: Common App proposed Solutions

Discussion: Open feedback

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We can’t become what we need to be by remaining what we are.

— Oprah Winfrey

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Just the beginning

With its own data, Common App has been able to make **incremental changes within the existing application** structure to reduce barriers for underserved students.

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We envision a transformed application that facilitates higher education access for all students

Our work will center around four key aspirations.

- Flexibility to evolve significantly over time
- Emphasis on growth rather than one-time performance
- Measures what matters
- A joyful, inclusive experience

Revolutionizing the college application

June 9 — 10, 2021

illuminate.commonapp.org/2021

illuminate ’21
common app

Where do we go next?

ideas.commonapp.org

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Thank you

Batanya Gipson
bgipson@commonapp.org

Meredith Lombardi
mlombardi@commonapp.org

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